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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO OSCE HIGH
COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES, KNUT VOLLEBAEK

Post is authorized to make the following statement at the June 26 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, in response to the report to be presented by High Commissioner for National Minorities Knut Vollebaek.

Begin Text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ambassador Vollebaek, to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his report.

The United States strongly supports the Office of the High Commissioner and believes it plays an important role in identifying and addressing national minority-related issues throughout the OSCE region.

We support the High Commissioner's assistance to participating States in the OSCE region. We are pleased to note his continued high level of commitment to foster interethnic dialogue and protection of the rights of minorities in Kosovo. In our view, the High Commissioner's efforts with the Kosovo Albanian and Serb communities are vital and should continue.

Experience has shown that detailed recommendations and guidelines are often helpful to public authorities and minorities in addressing and implementing national minority commitments. In particular, we believe that the High Commissioner on National Minorities can play a unique role in bringing together neighboring countries to address regional minority issues. We appreciate the High Commissioner's energetic efforts to achieve these worthy goals. In this context, we note with interest the High Commissioner's intention to launch a new set of recommendations regarding national minorities. We look forward to engaging in a dialogue with the High Commissioner on these recommendations.

The mandate of the High Commissioner on National Minorities requires his office to work in confidence and independently of all parties. We would like to reiterate our strong support for the continued autonomy of the High Commissioner as well as that of all OSCE institutions.

Ambassador Vollebaek, we wish you every success in your essential work in the coming year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

End text
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